

# 2012-2013 Weekly Field Reports

## Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 11  
December 24, 2012

### Science Report:

1. Penguins: Reproductive monitoring of Adélie penguins yielded only 25 out of the 100 Adélie penguin study nests that are still active, all of which now have chicks. The last four active known-age Adélie penguin nests still have chicks. The first Adélie penguin 21-day chick weights were conducted on Friday (12/28). Adélie penguin chicks also began crèching on Sunday (12/30) in the Castle Rocks colonies. Diet sampling of Adélie penguins continued on Thursday (12/28), with five more Adélie penguins from the Castle Rocks colonies selected.

Deployment of five satellite transmitters (PTTs) on Adélie penguins occurred on Sunday (12/30). Five Adélie penguins from Castle Rocks colonies that had two chicks and where both adults were present were selected. These birds were weighed and their culmen length and depth measured, before the PTTs were attached. The PTTs will remain on the birds for seven to ten days, to record where they go during their foraging trips. The data are downloaded at our offices in California.

Gentoo penguin reproductive success remained at 87 out of 100 nests still active, 66 of which are now with chicks. Fifty-seven of the known-age gentoo penguin breeders remain active, of which 48 have chicks. Gentoo penguin peak hatch for Copa Beach colonies was estimated to be Saturday (12/29). Though we have just reached peak hatch in the beach colonies, gentoo penguins in the hill colonies have begun to crèche, the first one seen on Saturday (12/23).

Breeding chinstrap penguin nests on Copa Beach stand at five, each with two eggs. Many chinstrap penguin chicks were seen this week at both the Uchatka and Patelnia colonies.

2. Skuas: Regular daily checks of the Copa skua breeding territories continue. There are currently eight active nests at Copa, all brown skuas with penguin territories. Three of these nests now have chicks. A few south polar skua territory holders were resighted this week, but still no breeding activity has been observed.

Point Thomas skua routes were completed on Tuesday (12/25) and Saturday (12/29). Numbers of active brown skua nests stand at five, two of which are with chicks. As with the Copa territories, some additional south polar skuas were seen on territory this week, but the resights remain inconsistent and no breeding activity was observed. We were able to retrieve three additional GLS tags from brown skuas at Point Thomas this week.



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The Demay and Patelnia skua routes were completed on Thursday (12/27). No additional nests were located and a minimal amount of skua pairs were resighted.

Back Country skua routes were completed on Saturday (12/29). Resights in the Back Country remain somewhat sporadic and irregular though a couple pairs have been seen near newly renovated nest bowls. There remain to be no active nests in the Back Country.

3. Sheathbills and Giant Petrels: Two unbanded sheathbills have been observed on Copa Rock. No nest searching was attempted this week.
4. Whales and Seals: Humpback whale sightings continue; whales were seen on Monday (12/24), Tuesday (12/25), Thursday (12/27), Friday (12/28), and Sunday (12/30). The largest number seen at one time was four individuals on Tuesday (12/25).

The Demay and Patelnia seal census, carried out on Thursday (12/27), yielded one male elephant seal, 425 juvenile/unknown sex elephant seals, 142 weaner elephant seals, and eight Weddell seals. The Copa and Point Thomas seal census, carried out on Sunday (12/30), yielded one large male elephant seal, 19 juvenile/unknown sex elephant seals, and two weaner elephant seals.

Leopard seal attacks continue off Copa Beach. There were seven leopard seal kills observed, four on Thursday (12/27) and three on Sunday (12/30). Three of the prey species were identified as Adélie penguins, the other four could not be identified.

5. Other: One lucky gentoo penguin continues to be seen attending a two-week old Adélie penguin chick on the outskirts of the Bolinas colony, while incubating what we assume are its own eggs.

Macaroni penguins were observed on Copa Beach Monday (12/24), Thursday (12/27), and on Ipanema Beach Sunday (12/30). Only one individual was seen at any one time. One macaroni penguin was also observed in the Point Thomas penguin colonies on Saturday (12/29) and Sunday (12/30).

### Weekly Weather:

The week's weather proved very accommodating with temperatures hovering just above or near freezing most days. Monday (12/24) was the only day with significant wind, but the weather proved good enough to make it to Arctowski for holiday festivities.



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### Camp Activities:

This week's camp activities included an extra visit to Arctowski for Christmas Eve. The Poles were very gracious as usual with a traditional feast and gifts. The captain and crew members from the Argentine Navy vessel, Castillo, visited Copa on Sunday (12/30). The captain offered any assistance we may need in the future and presented us with a coin representing friendship between the Castillo crew and the members of the Copacabana Field Camp.

Two members of the Copa crew joined the Poles on a trip to Chabrier Island, across the bay, on Wednesday (12/26), to conduct a census on nesting chinstrap penguins and collect other biological samples. Interesting observations included two macaroni penguins and one rockhopper penguin.

### The 2012-13 Copa Field Team:

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